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and greatest of all novelists has done. Sometimes, of course, the Titan errs, even to the point of making one smile—as when he concludes that Byron will lose his popularity on the Continent, but will continue to be read in England on account of his *form*—almost precisely the opposite phenomenon having occurred. But Balzac's slips are trivial, while his insight into men and books and events is often marvelously clear. We conclude by advising every one who is really interested in Balzac, and who has not ready access to the original volumes, to read this book, for which Miss Wormeley deserves hearty thanks.

MR. SWINBURNE'S NEW TRAGEDY.

ROSAMUND, QUEEN OF THE LOMBARDS: A TRAGEDY. By Algernon Charles Swinburne. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. 1899.

Albovine, King of the Lombards, having conquered the Gepidæ and killed their king, Cunimund, with his own hand, took his daughter Rosamund to wife. At the height of his power, while intoxicated at a great feast, Albovine compelled Rosamund to drink wine from her father's skull. She, in revenge for this, induced two soldiers to murder him while asleep. Such is the historical basis for Mr. Swinburne's small book of verse, entitled "*Rosamund: a Tragedy.*" The story is followed only in the large, there being many variations.

The place of the play is Verona. The time is the month of June, 573. The persons are Albovine, Almachildes, a young Lombard warrior, Narsetes, an old leader and counselor, Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards, and Hildegard, a noble Lombard maiden. Cunimund was slain, though, as Narsetes says to Albovine,

Manfully, but by thy mightier hand than his,
Manfully mastered.

Almachildes and Hildegard, the young lovers, are not historical, and Narsetes, the old counselor, is merely a helping figure to the drama. As a matter of fact, Rosamund lived with Albovine some four or five years before the crowning

outrage of her love to her father was offered. The poet, however, by condensation, makes the marriage recent, and presents Albovine as madly in love with his beautiful captive, but jealous with an elder man's jealousy for his young wife. This jealousy furnishes the motive to the ordeal of drinking from the skull, for thus is Rosamund's loyalty to her father to be compared with her love for her king. From the first we feel that Rosamund feels her position, in spite of the fact that she defends her expressions of affection to the king on the ground that she has been treated as an empress and not as a prize of victory. Her "I loved thee never more than now" is a remark of bitterly double meaning, after she has drunk from her father's skull; she cools the rising anger of the king and Almachildes, and goes off to plot her husband's destruction. Here the overelaboration in the plot that comes from the use of the two lovers weakens the effect. In history it was in a rage of passionate recollection of a father's love that the murder was decided on, and the instruments were two hired soldiers. Hildegard confesses the love Almachildes has for her, and is bound by an oath to the queen, on her love for the latter, to obey her commands. This is to get Almachildes to speak to her by nightfall, telling him that the queen, for her hatred to the king, will not give her maiden to a man beloved of him; but that if it were an utter shame that they wed not, she could not choose but yield. The meeting which Hildegard appoints for her lover is at night and silent, and Rosamund is to substitute herself, and thus win a weapon to strike with. Rosamund feels the wrong she is doing to secure vengeance, but it is necessary not only for revenge, but to release her from what is to her an imperial prostitution, a living with a lord she hates. Before Almachildes can come to the queen after hearing Hildegard's proposal, the king has told Rosamund that he repents his deed of the last night, but she steels her heart against repentance. When Almachildes does come, his hatred of the shame to ensue to his bride is overcome by the queen's

"Shamed she cannot be
If thou be found not shameless!"

She assures him also that the secret cannot come forth, and assigns as her reason for this some oath sealed in haste but not to be broken. The double injunction of darkness and silence is laid on him, and his reluctance is overcome. Rosamund, after the meeting, requires of the king that Almachildes take the maid to wife, and then is left alone with the young warrior, whose frantic gratitude is turned to horror when he learns that it was not Hildegard but Rosamund with whom he lay. On the threat that Hildegard shall die the harlot's death of burning for seeking him, which she cannot deny, Almachildes is forced to kill the king at a banquet. Rosamund then slays herself by a poisoned cup which she had prepared in case her arm, Almachildes, failed her.

This is clever, but it is not great. It is too subtle, the motives too elaborate, and at times obscure. The tragedy is the work of a man who can write poetry, and, choosing deliberately a subject that he fancies, sits down to write on it, and the result is not satisfactory. The speeches are not inevitable, the characters not firmly drawn, and though there is abundance of poetic phrasing, the lines struck from the poet's heart are more rare than the emotions which the subjects would seem to call for.

The blank verse is, in general, easy, with many liquid lines and alliterations that we associate with Swinburne, and it has many verbal reminiscences of Shakspeare. Where the verse is obscure it is bad—that is, it is obscure not from the packing of thought such as is found in “Antony and Cleopatra,” or of some passages in Milton, but from the laborious arrangement of words to get the required blank verse form (cf. on p. 35, beginning “Not she”). Besides the verse there are two other features distinctly taken from Shakspeare: the emphasis on the hot Verona summer, and its effect on the passions, directly from “Romeo and Juliet,” and the trick by which Almachildes is deceived, the most famous prototype of which is in “All's Well that Ends Well,” though of course Shakspeare did not originate the plot of either of these plays.

A taste which is not normal to Anglo-Saxons, or rather which

is not good among Anglo-Saxons, is displayed in the passionate love which Rosamund declares for her father, mentioning the kisses, much after the manner of a lover speaking of his mistress. The epithet "rosebright," as applied to anguish (p. 36,) seems distinctly bad. The best portions of the tragedy are Hildegard's speeches, declaring her splendid love for Almachildes, and certain ones of Rosamund's, particularly where she disposes of Albovine's repentance.

The poet, in giving up the claim to a very high place for his tragedy, by making it neither a play nor a poem, has effectually provided a defense against criticism. It cannot be attacked on the ground that it is a bad play, for it was never meant for a play; nor on the ground of lack of unity as a poem, because forsooth it is a tragedy. If it is a drama at all, it is distinctly a closet one, and not a great one of that class.

THE MADONNA IN LEGEND.

THE MADONNA IN LEGEND: A HISTORY. By Elizabeth C. Vincent, with an Introduction by Rt. Rev. Boyd Vincent. New York: Thomas Whitaker. 1899. pp. 104.

To have a brief, unaffected, gracious account of the doings and sufferings, the humiliations and glories of Holy Mary as the mediæval mythopœic genius, born of the general misery of chaotic times slowly fashioned her, as the painters of the Renaissance loved to present her, and as to many millions of devout Christians she has since been an object of tender regard and worship; to have such a narrative, simple, direct, unembarrassed by theological considerations, in sympathy with what was truest, sweetest, most human in that old ideal of godly womanhood, has doubtless been a very general desire. Whatever our views, our temperamental bias, we want to put such a story into the hands of our girls, for its loveliness's sake, for its subtle spiritual power. And when we realize that it is the yearnings of the purest in man making unto itself unconsciously through the centuries an image of motherhood, sisterhood, wifehood, daughterhood, who of us can remain content not to behold it,